

CLAIMS

1. A media proxy arranged to receive a first message from a near end of a path of a communications session, and before receiving a corresponding message from a far end, the media proxy is arranged to detect a blocking situation where another device in the path is awaiting the first message before forwarding the corresponding message.
2. The media proxy of claim 1, being arranged to send a probe message to discover if there is another media proxy along the path.
3. The media proxy of claim 2, arranged to send the probe message towards a predetermined port using an IP address indicated by a call server.
4. The media proxy of claim 3, arranged to listen on a predetermined port for probe messages from other entities.
5. The media proxy of claim 2, arranged to wait a predetermined time for the corresponding message before sending the probe message.
6. The media proxy of claim 2, arranged to set up a communication session using a multimedia control protocol.
7. The media proxy of claim 3 arranged to listen for a probe acknowledge message on the same port used for sending the probe message.
8. The media proxy of claim 1, the communication session being coupled through a NAT.
9. The media proxy of claim 8, the communication session being coupled to a VPN.
10. The media proxy of claim 1, being arranged to send the first message onwards before receiving the corresponding message from the second end, if the probe message is acknowledged.

11. The media proxy of claim 1, arranged to receive a probe request from a call server during set up.

5 12. A media proxy arranged to receive a first message from a near end of a path of a communications session, and await a corresponding message from a far end before forwarding messages between the ends, the media proxy being arranged to send the first message onwards before receiving the corresponding message from the second end, if the media proxy is made aware of a blocking situation where another device in the path is awaiting the first message before forwarding the corresponding message.

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13. A call server for use in setting up a communication session through a first media proxy, the call server being arranged to detect a blocking situation, where the media proxy has received a first message from a near end of a path of a communications session, and awaits a corresponding message from a far end before forwarding
15 messages between the near and far ends, the call server being arranged to cause the first media proxy to send a probe message to determine if there is a second media proxy in the path of the communication session, and if so, to cause the media proxy to send the first message onwards before the arrival of the corresponding message from the far end.

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14. The call server of claim 13 being arranged to send an IP address and port for the second media proxy to the first media proxy, to enable the first media proxy to send the first message onwards.

25 15. The call server of claim 13, being arranged to send a probe request to the media proxy in control messaging sent during call set up.

16. A method of setting up a communications session using a media proxy, the method having the steps of receiving a first message from a near end of a path of the
30 communications session, and before receiving a corresponding message from a far end, detecting a blocking situation where another device in the path is awaiting the first message before forwarding the corresponding message.

17. The method of claim 16, having the step of sending a probe message to discover if there is another media proxy along the path.

5 18. The method of claim 17, having the step of sending the probe message towards a predetermined port using an IP address indicated by a call server.

19. The method of claim 17, having the step of listening on a predetermined port for probe messages from other entities.

10 20. The method of claim 16, having the step of listening for a probe acknowledge message on the same port used for sending the probe message.

21. The method of claim 16, the communication session being coupled through a NAT.

15 22.. A method of offering a communication service through the media proxy of claim 1.

20 23. A method of operating a call server and a first media proxy to set up a communication session, and to detect a blocking situation, where the media proxy has received a first message from a near end of a path of a communications session, and awaits a corresponding message from a far end before forwarding messages between the near and far ends, the method having the steps of using the call server to determine if there is a second media proxy in the path of the communication session, and if so, to use the media proxy to send the first message onwards before the arrival of the corresponding message from the far end.

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24. Software arranged to carry out the steps of claim 16.